

Objection to Aldi application, ref 22/04095/FUL

27 March 2023

From Norwood Forum

We object to the application for an Aldi retail store with carparking for 43 cars and 64 cycles on several grounds:

Location: The Forum Committee believes that, because of its location, the store will draw business away from existing town centre shops. This will particularly affect the three small supermarkets in Norwood town centre, one of which (the Co-op) has been a supermarket site for many decades. But an Aldi at this distance from the town centre, accessible by car, could also affect butchers, the Floral Hall flower shop, the fruit and vegetable stall on Chestnut Road, Superdrug and small, independent businesses. It will also draw custom away from small shops at Crown Point and on Norwood High Street.

Parking in the town centre can be challenging, although the forum has worked hard with the council and local businesses to improve parking availability. We recognise that many Norwood residents - particularly older people - do use their cars for local shopping, because the hilly terrain makes it difficult for them to walk home laden with heavy bags. Providing a shop with a car park, *outside* the centre, is therefore all the more likely to pull them away from the centre and generate more traffic.

The development of an "out-of-town" supermarket runs counter to the town centre policy outlined in the 2021 Lambeth Plan.

Environment: Locating a supermarket on this site, with a carpark, seems designed to encourage car use – unlike the existing supermarkets in the town centre. This flies in the face of Lambeth's and residents' desire to reduce emissions and encourage more walking and cycling.

KIBA designation: The site is unsuitable for retail due its designation as part of the council's West Norwood Key Industrial and Business Area. This designation is intended to encourage light industrial business, creative industries and manufacturing, not retail. Aldi argues that the site would be unlikely to be viable for these intended uses. However, the company has not presented any evidence of non-viability and the West Norwood Business Improvement District, Station to Station, asserts that there is demand for affordable commercial space for small companies. We do not feel that the offer of some commercial space on the first floor of the building is sufficient to ignore the designation.

Traffic: We are concerned that traffic constantly entering and leaving the carpark from Knight's Hill will pose a danger to pedestrians who would have to walk across what is a very wide entrance also used by delivery vehicles. Northbound traffic turning into the carpark or coming out and turning right would also add an extra hazard to this rather dangerous road. Knight's Hill is a very long hill and, despite the 20mph speed limit, vehicles come racing down it. Requests for speed humps in the past have been rejected after objections from the Fire Station further up the hill. There have been several serious accidents on the road.

Clearly, any development on that site is likely to generate traffic. But the light industrial use for which the site is intended would be likely to cause fewer traffic movements than a supermarket carpark.

Conclusion: Aldi is applying for a store which more people would welcome if it was in a town centre location. We have no objection to an Aldi in West Norwood. But it needs to be contributing to the vitality of the town centre and not detracting from it, creating unfair competition to local business and adding to environmental pollution.